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WALDORF, MD - On Saturday, February 9, Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD) attended the 27th Annual Black History Month Breakfast along with Senator Ben Cardin and Tavis Smiley, Host of Tavis Smiley on PBS and The Tavis Smiley Show from PRI, who was the honored keynote speaker. More than 400 community leaders from Charles, Calvert, St. Mary's, Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties attended the event to pay tribute to Black History Month and to celebrate the theme, "The State of Black America: Where Do We Go From Here?" Congressman Hoyer helped start the annual breakfast when he became a member of Congress in 1981 and has been a guest every year since.

Delivering the welcome remarks, Rep. Hoyer stated, "As Americans from all across our country come together to commemorate Black History Month today, we should all remain aware of the fact that our nation's diversity serves as the foundation of our greatest strengths and the inspiration behind our greatest accomplishments. Our culture has been deeply enriched and forever changed for the better by the accomplishments we celebrate this month. So please make time this February - and throughout the rest of the year - to take notice of all the groundbreaking cultural, political, social and scientific contributions made by African Americans that have made our nation stronger."

Later in the breakfast, guests heard from keynote speaker, Tavis Smiley, host of the late night television talk show, Tavis Smiley on PBS, and radio program, The Tavis Smiley Show distributed by Public Radio International. Smiley, who was profiled by Newsweek as one of the "20 people changing how Americans get their news," is the first American ever to simultaneously host signature talk shows on both public television and public radio.

In addition, Smiley has authored eleven books, including the New York Times bestseller Covenant with Black America, and his latest book - a memoir - What I Know for Sure: My Story of Growing up in America. In 2007, Smiley moderated and executive-produced the Democratic and Republican All-American Presidential Forums on PBS. This marked the first time in history that a panel exclusively comprised of journalists of color was represented in primetime television conducting a presidential debate.

"Our keynote speaker, Tavis Smiley, has dedicated his life serving as a voice of change in America," stated Hoyer in his introduction of Smiley. "From his prolific contributions to political discourse to his work inspiring the next generation of leaders, Tavis Smiley has emerged as one of the most significant voices of this generation."

During his 20 minute address, Smiley riveted the audience with an inspirational call to “create a nation that is as good as its promise.” Smiley said it is not only important to look back and commemorate the history of Black America, but it is incumbent on current generations to shape the history of tomorrow: “We celebrate Black History Month because somebody did something yesterday. The eyes of the future are looking back at us and praying for us to see beyond our time.”

The breakfast was held at Middleton Hall in Waldorf, MD with more than 400 community and civic leaders attending. The event began with the posting of the colors by the Thomas Stone High School JROTC and the singing of the National Anthem by Dr. Marymal Holmes. Musical selections were performed by nine-year-old Andre Jones and local jazz sensation Mr. Marcus Johnson. Pastor James I. Bell, Sr. of God's House of Refuge Church of God and Christ gave the invocation; Bishop James C. Wallace, Sr. of the Faith Community Church presided over the blessing of the food; and the Reverend Dr. Samson Y. Nortey of the Eastern and St. John United Methodist Churches gave the benediction.

Previous guest speakers who have participated in this Black History Month celebration include Sen. Barack Obama, ABC 7 News Anchors Maureen Bunyan and Leon Harris, Vernon Jordan, Donna Brazile, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Rep. Elijah Cummings, former Rep. and NAACP President Kweisi Mfume, Rep. John Lewis, Carmen Turner and former Mayor Anthony Williams.

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